



**Pacific Gas and
Electric Company**

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News Department
77 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415/973-5930

NEWS

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CONTACT: News Department (415) 973-5930



**PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY PREPARES FOR SERIES OF
LATE-WINTER STORMS, URGES CUSTOMERS TO BE SAFE**

Upcoming Weather Systems Expected To Be Almost As Severe As December Storms

SAN FRANCISCO – Spring might be just around the corner, but Mother Nature reminds us that winter is still here. Meteorologists are forecasting a powerful series of storms to hit much of northern and central California starting Thursday. These storms are expected to bring heavy rain and powerful winds gusting up to 60 miles per hour and possibly higher.

Like the storms that pounded the region in November and December, causing severe, widespread damage, this late-winter, back-to-back series of storms are expected to cause damage to infrastructure and bring weather-related power outages. As always, the 18,000 men and women of Pacific Gas and Electric Company are prepared to provide responsive service and timely information for the 13 million Californians the utility serves. In the event damage exceeds the company's ability to restore outages in a timely fashion, the utility has made arrangements to bring in additional personnel to augment its workforce and expedite repairs.

"We've battled some very intense and destructive storms this season and each time we have put our resources into restoring power as quickly and safely as possible – and this storm will be no different," said Jeff Butler, vice president of operations, maintenance and construction at the utility. "Our crews and emergency response personnel are prepared to handle anything Mother Nature brings our way, and our call centers and customer service representatives are ready to provide outage information to those who might be affected by the storm."

During these fierce storms, it is likely that power outages will occur in northern and central California. Should the power go out, Pacific Gas and Electric Company customers can get the latest information on service restoration times by calling a special power outage phone number at 1-800-PGE-5002. This automated phone system is the quickest way for customers to receive the most current information about outages in their neighborhood.

In addition to this automated outage information number, Pacific Gas and Electric Company recently established a new outage hotline for customers who have been without power

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for more than 48 hours. This hotline number is part of the new Safety Net Program the company implemented following the December storms. Features of the Safety Net Program are:

- Customers who have been without power for more than 48 hours can call the outage hotline at 1-888-PGE-4PGE (888-743-4743) to reach a trained customer service representative with whom they can speak about the outage they are experiencing.
- The Safety Net Program also provides automatic payments to residential customers who are without power for more than 48 hours – from \$25 up to \$100 depending on the length of the outage. These payments, which are funded through shareholders, are separate from the utility's existing service quality guarantee program, and from the damage claims process customers may also pursue.

The new 48-hour line is intended to work much like the 911 system. Both emergency phone systems will put callers through to individuals who can help, but only if the lines remain open for true emergencies. PG&E customers are urged not to call the 48-hour line unless they have truly gone without power for more than 48 hours.

Like most utilities, Pacific Gas and Electric Company relies on its customers to notify the company of power outages. For this reason, it is important to make sure PG&E has the correct phone number on file (the phone associated with the place where a customer receives service). This allows the utility's customer information system to provide customers with the most accurate information about the status of any outage a customer is experiencing. PG&E customers are urged to make sure the utility has their correct phone number on file.

As part of its regular maintenance program, and to provide safe and reliable service, the utility has an extensive patrol and inspection program for all 110,000 miles of its overhead electric lines. In 2002, the company spent approximately \$140 million on its vegetation management program, trimming trees and removing the worst ones entirely, to help prevent tree branches from coming into contact with power lines and causing outages. The utility's tree trimming efforts include pruning trees in such a manner as to account for typical storm-related wind sway.

In addition, the utility invests approximately \$1.5 billion each year on capital improvements to maintain reliability, expand service and help the electric system withstand storms, floods and other disasters.

This winter's powerful storms reminded everyone of the importance of emergency preparedness. Pacific Gas and Electric Company offers these tips to help customers prepare for the storms:

- Make sure PG&E has your correct phone number on file (the phone number associated with the place you get service). This allows us to provide you with more accurate information about the status of any outage you might experience. If you have doubts about whether or not PG&E has the right number on file, please call us at 1-800-PGE-5000. Don't wait for the storm to hit!
- Have fresh batteries in radios so you can receive updates on storm conditions and power outages. It is also recommended that you keep extra batteries for your flashlights.
- Empty, clean plastic milk jugs or 2-liter soda bottles can be used to make ice. Fill them to about two inches from the top and store them in your freezer. If the power goes out, you can move them to your refrigerator to keep food cool. With minimal opening and shutting of doors, food can remain usable for up to four hours. For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website at www.fsis.usda.gov
- If you have a stand-by electric generator, inform PG&E and make sure that it's installed safely. If not, you risk damaging your property and endangering PG&E line workers who may be working on power lines some distance from your home. Visit our generator safety page at www.pge.com/generator

Pacific Gas and Electric Company also offers these tips to customers in the event that the power does go out:

- Treat all downed power lines as if they are "live" or energized. Keep yourself and others away from them and immediately notify PG&E at 1-800-PGE-5000 or call 911.
- PG&E recommends that customers do not use candles because of the risk of fire. If you must use candles, extreme caution is urged. Do not use candles near drapes, under lampshades or near any flammable objects. Keep candles away from small children, and do not leave candles unattended.
- If your power goes out, unplug or turn off all electric appliances. Otherwise, when power is restored, several appliances may come back on at once and overload your circuits, or hot appliances may come on while you're away or asleep and pose a fire hazard. You may want to leave one light on to tell you when power is restored.

For information on storm preparation and safety, please visit our Web site at www.pge.com/safetycorner